

THE BEACON OF WAR FOR FREEDOM SRI SATGURU RAM SINGH JEE AND NAMDHARI SIKHS



Ajit Singh Namdhari



Government of Punjab



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BY
Ajit Singh Namdhari
Secretary- Namdhari Darbar



GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB

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BY:Ajit Singh Namdhari

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PREFACE

It was on 17 January 1872 AD, when 49 Namdhari Sikhs were blown to bits with cannons at Malerkotla for waging a war of freedom. A twelve-year-old child Bishan Singh was cut into pieces for he had caught the Deputy Commissioner Mr. Cowen by the beard. On the same night, Satguru Ram Singh Ji, the master mind behind this uprising, was arrested and sent to the Allahabad jail. On 11 March 1872, he was made to board a ship at Kolkata for exiling and deporting him to Rangoon (Myanmar) under Bengal Regulation - III, 1818.

At that time the English ruler asked him, "Ram Singh, what shall you do now for we have captured you and your Subas (lieutenant)"?

Satguru Ram Singh Ji replied him very firmly, "O blue-eyed chap, I have created Ram Singh's in every household, I have sparked such an amber as will burn your empire to ashes."

History bears testimony to this fact that this saying of Sat guru Ram Singh Ji turned out to be a truth in verbatim. There was awareness in the whole country. The Indians became frenzy for freedom. There were slogans of 'Inquilab-Zindabad' in every nook & corner of the country. The skies reverberated with the chants of 'Vande Matram.' The Indians of every

caste, creed, colour, group & age united and girded their loins up to liberate the mother India. Then the ropes of gallows, cannon's balls, the miseries of jails could not hamper them down. By virtue of sacrifices of the patriots, the country got her freedom. The late Prime Minister of India Mrs Indira Gandhi had rightly said, "Our struggle for freedom had got co-operation from every part of the society. The contribution of the Namdhari Sikhs in this struggle was of great importance and unique."

In fact, not only did the Namdharis laid down their lives and fought against British rulers continuously for 90 years from 12 April 1857 to 15 August 1947, but also guided the countrymen on the path of struggle for freedom. It is for this reason that we shall get a glimpse of the philosophy, wisdom and political insight of Satguru Ram Singh Ji in the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi ji, doctrines of Pandit Nehru, words of Shree Balgangadhar Tilak, life of Netaji and philosophy of Shaheed Bhagat Singh.

Let us now study Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji and Namdhari Sikhs in this context.

BEFORE THE STRUGGLE

Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji was born on the day of Magh Sudhi Panchmi, the Basant Day Samvat 1872

Bikrmi , 3rd February in 1816 AD at village Raian, in District Ludhiana (Punjab). As per the prevalent social norms of the day, Satguru Ji was married to Mata Jassan Ji daughter of Shri Sahibu Ji of village Dharodi at a tender age of about seven years. At an age of around 22 years, he joined Maharaja Ranjit Singh army regiment of Prince Nau-Nihal Singh under the command of Brigade-Major Mackson. But he had a disposition of sadhus. For this reason his platoon was known as 'Platoon of Bhagats.'

Maharaja Ranjit Singh died on 27 June 1839 and Punjab fell on bad days. The Sikh Raj became a victim of the 'divide and rule' policy of the Britishers. The Sikh generals started to get the invincible Khalsa army slaughtered for their own petty gains. Keeping a keen eye on the situation, Satguru Ram Singh warned his colleagues in the army of the impending disaster and he quitted the service and returned home in 1845 A.D. What happened to the Lahore Darbar is all a historical fact. During 1845 Anglo-Sikh war, the Khalsa general Lal Singh turned a traitor, after crossing the Sutlej instead of attacking Ferozepur, he wrote a letter to Captain Peter Nicholson and asked, "I have crossed the Sutlej. You are aware of my loyalty to the British. Tell me what should I do?" The answer was, "Ferozepur is not to be attacked and stay as long as you can." If instead of playing a traitor he "had attacked Ferozepur at

that time, the history of Punjab perhaps would have been different after 1845 AD. But Lal Singh did not take any interest in the battle after ordering his troops to attack at Mudki. There was a similar treason during the battle of Ferozeshah when Lal Singh fled the field with his men and cannons leaving the patriots to die in front of the enemy artillery and Tej Singh joined the British camp to prove his loyalty. During the battle of Sabhravan too Lal Singh joined the army camp to divulge important details of the formations of the Khalsa army.”(2)

Though Guru Ji had left the army, he watch and analysed for a full decade of 1839-1849 the steady political fall of Punjab. On the morning of March 29, 1849 AD, the last darbar of the free Punjab was held at 7 o'clock and on the arrival of the British officers Elliot and Sir Henry Lawrence, it was declared in Persian language that Punjab had been merged with the British Raj. The minor Sikh Monarch Maharaja Dalip Singh was made to abdicate after he had signed the declaration. As per the orders of Lord Dalhousie , Maharaja Dalip Singh was sent to Fatchpur Sikri on December 21, 1849 AD and afterwards to England after converting him to Christianity.

After subjugating Punjab politically, the British embarked upon the heinous task of culturally

making Punjab hollow. Even during the lifetime of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the British had made Ludhiana a centre of Christian missionaries in 1834 AD. The very next year, Dr. Lorrie opened a school to propagate Christianity in the region. A church had come into being there in the month of January 1837.. All this had occurred in Satguru Ram Singh's own district Ludhiana. With the hoisting of 'Union Jack' at Lahore. the Christian's preaching had started to get official support. "Presbyterian Mission established its centres at Ambala (1848), Lahore (1848), and Ravalpindi (1865).The Church Mission established its head quarters at Amritsar(1852), Kangra (1854) and Multan and Peshawar(1855). In two years, they had five head quarters , 24 preachers, three small middle schools, nine Urdu schools with 488 students, two boarding schools , 35 girls schools and 27 Sunday schools.(3)

Conversion always raised protest in the society. In order that one did not have to face financial loss, Lord Dalhousie got an act (Lex Loci Act) enacted in 1850 AD, which ensured that a person could remain a legal heir to his parental property even after converting to Christianity.

After subjugating the countrymen to the slavery of soul and body, the British started to make the country hollow economically. The cottage industry was attacked and British merchandise started to

rise in the Indian markets. "From 1814 AD to 1835 AD the consumption of the British cloth rose from 10 lakh yards to 5 crore 10 lakh yards. During the same time the consumption of Indian cotton cloth in England declined from 77 lakh 50 thousand rolls to 30 lakh 6 thousand rolls and in 1844 AD it was only 63000 rolls..... The English machine made cloth ruined the weavers of India. The machine-spun cotton terminated all the avenues of the Indian weavers of livelihood. From 1818 to 1836 the consumption of English cotton became 4200 times more than before"(4)

Other than this people were also bogged down by evil practices in the society. The rich Jagirdars, who were dancing attendance upon their British masters, were exploiting the poor people. The birth giving woman who plays the different rolls of mother, sister & wife sustains patriarchy, was being exploited. The prevalent social malpractices like female infanticide, selling and bartering of daughters, child marriage, sati and negation of widow re-marriage etc. had further deteriorated the social conditions .

The need of the hour was freedom of the country, social reform, betterment of economic conditions, decreasing the gulf between the rich and the poor and enlightening the people spiritually. Keeping all this in mind Satguru Ram Singh Ji charted out a

contingency plan after deep and long reflection of twelve years from 1845 to 1857 and he took the first pious stride towards the creation of a new society.

THE CREATION OF SANT KHALSA AND FREEDOM

Satguru Ram Singh Ji made Bhaini Sahib in District Ludhiana (Punjab) his 'KARAM BHOOMI' (Head quarter) and on the auspicious day of Baisakhi April 12, 1857 AD he started to enroll people for the noble cause. He prepared the Amrit (nectar) of 'Khanda Bata' and baptized five Sikhs Bhai Kahan Singh Nihang of village Chuck Kalan (Riasat Malerkotla), Bhai Labh Singh Raagi of Amritsar, Bhai Sudh Singh of village Durgapur District Jalandhar, Bhai Atma Singh of village Alampur District Sialkot and Bhai Naina Singh of village Variahan District Sialkot and made them embark upon the path of truth. Guru ji considered it essential for inculcating self-respect and courage among people. Hence in order to preach them the doctrine of "Bhai kaahu ko det nahi, nahi bhai manta aan" (neither creates fear among others nor create sense of fear in own mind) and to develop high levels of character, Guru ji preached his followers to do the Naam Simran (meditation) and the recital of 'Gurubani'. He got pious Beers of 'Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib' lithographic printing From

Lahore so that people might read Gurubani to make them enlightened. He made them always remember the saying of Sri Satguru Nanak Dev ji "Haq paraya Nanka us suar us gaye" so as to make them earn a true and rightful living. He also preached them to lead vegetarian and tee totler life. He propagated that both boys and girls should be given equal chance of education. On 1st June, 1863, he baptized the women for the first time at village Siaarh District Ludhiana and to grant them equal status in the society, he installed them as Suba (Lieutenant). The first woman installed as the Suba (Lieutenant) was Bibi Hukami.

At that time the expenditures related to marriages had increased manifold. Hence social malpractices like selling or bartering the girls were in vogue. Satguru Ram Singh Ji initiated a brand new ritual for marriages where there was no room for 'thaka', 'shagun', 'barat-doli', 'milni', 'muklave' and dowry and called it 'ANAND - KARAJ'. He brought about a revolution in the society by solemnizing the marriages only in one rupee and twenty five paisa. For the first time six inter-caste marriages were solemnized at village Khotte in District Ferozepur. The sanctity of the ANAND KARAJ was established in this way that first of all a Havan (Sacred Fire) was performed. While performing Havan instead of the chanting of the 'Ved mantras' gurbani was

recited i.e. Japuji Sahib, Jap Sahib, Chaupai, Ugardanti, Akal Ustati, Chandi Di Vaar and Chandi Charitra Doosra. After the havan , pheras (circles) were taken round the HAVAN KUND. During the pheras (circles) four times , Shabads (stanzas) from the Addi Sri Guru Granth Sahib were recited. It was for the first time in the history that marriages were solemnized by the recitals of the pure and pious lines from the Addi Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Because before this all the marriages that were solemnized before June 3, 1863 AD were solemnized by the Pandits as per the Sanatan sanctity.

“Sri Ram Singh Kuke Pahile, Anand Suchhand Padae Sahile Tinko Dekh Aur Sikh Ghane, Lage Anand Parawan Tane.”(6)

(Sri Ram Singh kuka was the first to perform Marriage by Anand karaz system, Seeing this, countless Sikhs started performing marriages by Anand karaz system)”

This was a blow to the profession and monopoly of the so called self styled keepers and Brahmins etc. of the society. They filled their complaints to the English rulers against the Guru. Satguru Ram Singh Ji was taken to Bhaini Sahib under police surveillance.

“Baba Ram Singh has been a great reformer and

leader who has preached for the complete union of man and woman and succeeded in his preachings as well. If we leave aside his other great efforts which he put for the race and the nation, his one preaching alone that both men and women have equal rights in the society gives him a place among all the leading reformers of the world.(7)”

But in the reformist movement of Satguru Ram Singh Ji ,the British rulers started to see a danger to their authority. The reports were also to the effect that the Guru wanted to re-establish Khalsa Rule.

Hence it was ordered by the Government of Punjab on 03.07.1863 that “Ram Singh is to be directed to remain in his village & the police will keep themselves informed and report direct on his (Satguru Ram Singh) proceedings,”(8)

This vigil lasted till 13.02.1867.The British thought that there will be a lull in the preaching activities of the Kukas but what happened was exactly opposite to their expectations. Guru Ji established first five and then another seventeen Subas (Lieutenant) Right across the villages and cities they brought the Guru’s teachings to the masses.

“By the year 1867, he (Guru Ram Singh Ji) had got many deciples around him. He had ten lakh followers

(Sikhs) and they appeared to be working towards the formation of a political party.”(9)

“By looking at the huge mass of these people it appears that this recent cult has progressed very quickly. Village after village has turned kuka. Even Guru Nanak, when he started his religion, was not so lucky to have one thousand disciples in ten years. His religion progressed in the time of his successors. This one has got lakhs of Kukas in his lifetime.”(10)

English Major MacAndrew, D.I.G. wrote in his report to the government,

“The preaching (Guru) Ram Singh is just now creating a good deal of sensation in the Punjab”(11)

Guru Ji taught people that life of a slave is no life freedom has all the blisses & is the growth of humanity. Man's religious and social progress is hidden in the freedom. He gave the slogan that freedom is my religion. Because “Guru Ram Singh believed that political freedom was a part of religion.”- Dr. Rajinder Prasad. (12)

These words of Satguru got assimilated into the heart and soul of the people. They started to raise their voice against the British in the form of fearless, courageous 'kooks' (shouts). For this reason people started to call them 'Kukas' From the sound of the

kooks (shouts) of Namdhari Sikhs. warriors echoed Bal Gangadhar Tilak's saying "Freedom is my birthright".

Satguru Ram Singh Ji gave the Khalsa a new form of the 'Sant Khalsa' by merging the Bhakti and Shakti (spiritualism & militancy) elements. The word 'Sant' (saint) was a manifestation of the higher and pure way of life of the Namdhari's Sikhs . It is recorded by Britishers writes: "Kuka does not tell a lie", 'Kuka does not take liquor', 'Kuka is not a loyal of the british....". And to raise their voice against the injustice of the British, to stand up for the protection of the 'Gau & Gareeb' (cow and the down trodden) was a manifestation of that Khalsa form which Satguru Gobind Singh Ji had decreed thus;

*"Chunkar az heelte dar guzasht,
Halalsat burdan b-shamshir dast"*

But in order to become a Sant Khalsa one had to fulfill one condition, which was;

*"Pahila marn kabool kar jeevan ki chhad aas
Hoh sabhna ki renuka teu aao hamare paas" –*
(page-1102 Sri Adi Granth Sahib)

(Set aside all the worldly wishes, accept the truth of death, Be humble to serve the humanity, thus comes to me)

It was a matter of self submission, self respect, renunciation of the feeling of richness and poverty which was adopted by the Indians of all hues and they started to become Sant Khalsa, Namdharis / Kuka Sikhs.

Satguru Ram Singh Ji's policy of yielding to the Almighty "Pehilan maran Kabool" impressed Netaji Subhash Chander Bose. He constituted Indian National Army and adopted this philosophy of Satguru Ram Singh as his war plan. Netaji coaxed his countrymen, "You give me blood I shall give you freedom."

Guru Ram Singh Ji's 'Hohu Sabhna Ki Renuka' again has deep meanings. At that time the society was divided into rich and poor. Guru Ji hit hard at this division. He made the sons of the rich families forgo the chains of gold, the silken robes etc. All, whether rich or poor were asked to wear clothes of 'Khadi' (white cotton) & white malas (woolen rosary) which was a purely Indian attire. It had two major reasons

1. To break the outer differences by eliminating the outer distinction to dispel the inferiority complex from the minds of the poor people. Because of the bhajan recitals there was

already a spiritual communion among the people, by giving them a similar exterior uniformity in the clothing, Guruji lead the people towards a unification. Now they were disciplined, just like a soldier.

2. By wearing Indian made 'Khadi' (cotton cloth), the foreign made cloth was automatically negated and the consumption of the foreign cloth started to decline. The enhanced consumption of the local cotton cloth started to help the local cottage industry. The poor started getting work and the money got started to be used in the country itself.

From this simplicity of Guruji's 'KHADI' was born Mahatma Gandhi's spinning wheel some 50 years later. Gandhiji first himself boycotted the foreign cloth and attires and then started to preach the people for it.

NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT AND SELF-RULE

"In fact the historic movement of non cooperation and swadeshi that was started by the Guruji had shaken the very foundations of the British Empire in India and with the help of the same philosophy Gandhi Ji was able to throw away the foreign yolk from our country."(14)

The movement for non cooperation for the independence of the country proved to be a unique thing which was started for the first time in the world by Satguru Ram Singh Ji.

“(Guru) Ram Singh , Sikh philosopher and reformer and the first Indian to use Non-cooperation and boycott the British merchandise and services as a political weapon”. 15

“His Non-cooperation was superior to Gandhi’s concept . He successfully preached the boycott of the courts, government education and telegraph and established own panchaiats. At that time the country had become so weak that it was not plausible to even think of boycott.” (15)

Complete boycott of the British government meant ‘Complete Independence’ for which the Congress passed the resolution at the Lahore session in 1929. Satguru Ram Singh was not the one who believed in saying things only, but he implemented his thoughts into reality. Hence along with the boycott he ensured the fulfillment of the day to day needs, settlement the disputes, business and proper arrangement for the children’s education. By ordering the use of Swadeshi products the Indian goods came to be used. It also encouraged the local cottage industry. Arrangement for children education was made at Dharamshalas, Temples and Gurudwaras so that

the children may know and understand their own culture. Kukas had established Panchaiats in response to the courts, by establishing Subas (Lieutenants) in the various areas, Jathedars for preaching, own Kuka Mail Service, having contacts with the Indian states, Kuka platoon in Kashmir for the military training and diplomatic relations with countries like Nepal, Kabul and Russia.

“Not only had the state of Punjab been divided into subas, but Guru preached an early re-establishment of the Sikh rule in the state and was collecting the power groups of all the strata of the Sikh community.....Had sent his diplomats in Kashmir, Kabul and Nepal. They(Kukas) had such an efficient secret mail system that Guru's commands reached far away places in no time”(16)

DECLARATION OF THE WAR

The British had enslaved the Indians with the help of their divide and rule policy. In answer to this policy Guruji adopted the policy of “Unite and Fight”. People got united and a formidable force was prepared. When the British had not totally got Punjab under their control they had promised that cows would not be killed. But in 1849, after the British had got complete hold of the Punjab, the cow slaughter became a common thing. After wards, in order to

divide the Indians on religious basis, the British accepted the cow slaughter as a policy and abattoirs were started at many places in the state. Now “stopping of cow slaughter was a proof of this fact that the Indians now could throw away the foreign yolk. Accepting cow slaughter officially was a fact to be brought home to the Indians that they were now slaves”. (17)

Namdhari Sikhs had never accepted foreign rule. Further Satguru Ram Singh had planned to wage a war against the foreign rule with the help of the force of the masses, that he had garnered under the namdhari sect. He was clear when he was to attack the foreign powers. “After deep deliberations over the doctrines and principles of warfare, Satguru Ram Singh had theorized the entire concept. It is essential for every organized campaign that there should be one nucleus. This nucleus of faith should be stable and un-ambiguous. It should be shining, solid and un-failing like a divine aura. Satguru Ram Singh ji made the holy cow the nucleus of his holy war”. (18)

The British wanted the Indians to fight each other in the name of religion. Guru ji wanted to unite the Indians and expel the British. Hence, he had a thorough understanding of the British policy and the Namdhari Sikhs declared war against the British.

MARTYRDOMS

The established abattoirs which the British had started to make Indians realize that they were slaves, were becoming the localized spots for communal riots and the country-men kept fighting and killing each other in the name of religion, hence these slaughter houses were targeted. According to S. Arjun Singh Ghargaj "Namdharis didn't intend to annihilate the slaughterers, but the slaughter-houses. They considered these abattoirs to be established centers for perpetual cause of communal disharmony, which could become a cause of Hindu-Muslim riots and which later on proved to be correct".

The pious sarovar at Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar is a symbol of our glorious history. A abattoirs was in operation near the holy shrine. When the remains of the slaughtered cows started falling in the sarovar and parikrama of Hari-mandir sahib, people's patience was to the brim. Henceforth on the night of 14-15th June 1871, . the Namdhari's Sikhs, fearless men attacked the slaughterhouses to get it forcibly closed and after a months time they waged another offensive against the Raikot slaughter house as well..

This was a defiance of the British rule by the Kukas. The British too took it as revolt. Mr. J.W Macnabb

writes, "I considered that the slaughter of butchers carrying on their trade in places expressly sanctioned by the British government, was a direct defiance of our authority, and I submit that any failing in carrying out to its uttermost the punishment of such defiance is dangerous to our power"(19)

The British authorities were baffled with these two back to back attacks. Some Hindus and Sikhs were captured and false cases were filed against them, they were made to confess under duress that they had attacked the Amritsar slaughterhouse. But the fact of the matter came to the fore when the Namdhari Sikhs surrendered in the court and openly produced evidence that they had executed these attacks.

On September 9, 1871 the government of Punjab sent a report to the Indian government,

"They made full confessions, which led to the conviction and the execution of the three of the numbers, named Mastan Singh, Gurmukh Singh and Mangal Singh. They were executed on the 5th Aug.(1871)". ****

In the Amritsar case, four Sikhs named, Beelha Singh, Hakim Singh Patwari, Lehna Singh and Fateh Singh Bhatra were hanged on September 15, 1871. Further three Sikhs named Lal Singh, Lehna Singh

Lopoke, and Lehna Singh S/O Blaka Singh were exiled to Andaman's Cellular Jail. All the four Sikhs first bathed in the pious sarovar at Hari-mandir Sahib and then reached Ram Bagh, reciting the scriptures, where they were to be hanged publicly. Sardar Santokh Singh Bahawal writes

“the Singhs have flashing faces showing no sign of remorse, as if they have no fear of death, reciting the shabads fearlessly and go up the gallows. These courageous ones did not let the executioner come near them. They themselves tightened the noose around their necks. Swan like faces and wearing spotless white attires they uttered Sat Sri Akal, got the wood under their feet removed, had the last sway on the noose and shed their last breaths.”(21)

In the Raikot case, two more Namdhari Sikhs Suba Giani Rattan Singh and Sant Rattan Singh were hanged from a banyan tree outside the Ludhiana central jail. Before going to the gallows Suba Giani Rattan Singh coaxed the British officer and thus spake,

“O Phirangi, dare to face me . Why turn your back on me? I shall come back again after spending ten months in the womb of a Jaat Sikh woman. When I am young , I shall avenge this deed of yours.”(22)

THE MASSACRE OF MALERKOTLA

After these incidents, the British were very cautious. On December 30th, 1871 the Punjab Government gave instructions to all the Commissioners and Deputy Inspector General Police

“ I am directed by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor that you will not permit Ram Singh , Kuka, or his leading Subahs, to visit any large fair or gathering , except under the express sanction Government.” (23)

The ruler could foresee his doom at the hands of the Namdhari Sikhs. He was looking for a plausible excuse. He got a chance when a big troop of Namdhari Sikhs attacked Malerkotla in January 1872. On the evening of January 14th, a minor squirmish started at Maloud in which both the sides lost two men each. Four Namdharis got fatally wounded who were caught by the people of Maloud. All these four Namdhari Sikhs Bhagwan Singh, Gian Singh ,Thamman Singh and Mehar Singh were first given the gallows and later were sentenced to be sent to Andaman's Cellular Jail. All these four Singhs got martyrdom in the jail itself.

The Namdharis attacked Malerkotla from the Dhaba Gate. Both the sides suffered heavy casualties. Seven

Sikhs were martyred and one was badly wounded who was later captured by the people of Malerkotla and was later killed. On this very day this group of Namdharis reached village Rarh. Sardar Hera Singh addressed the Namdhari troops,

“Brave hearts! We have succeeded in our mission. We just wanted to tell the foreign ruler that the mere breathers of the air have woken up from their slumber. They neither like the foreign rule nor tolerate any interference in their religious matters”

Soon after this, they passed a resolution and surrendered at the village Sherpur. Exacly like this later Sardar Bhagat Singh did not run away after lobbing a bomb in the Assembly but had exposed the British government by courting arrest. The British wanted to smother all those ambers of freedom that could threaten his rule. Hence he made up his mind that he would annihilate these Baghi Namdhri Sikhs (sediator). At that time the control of the Riasat of Malerkotla was in the hands of the British Deputy Commissioner Mr. Cowen. He got nine cannons from Nabha, Jind and Patiala and got these installed at the Malerkotla parade ground.

Then he gathered the people of the nearby villages so that no one could dare to revolt after seeing the punishment meted out to the Namdhari Sikhs. The

troop of Namdhari Sikhs entered the bloody ground of Malerkotla. Mr. Cowen writes,

Mr. Cowen writes to the Ambala Commissioner in his letter No. 16 dated 17.01.1872.,

“I have the honour to report to you that 68 rebel Kookas were brought in today from Rurr. Of these two were women., leaving 66 men; 22 of the men were wounded; most of them slightly”(24)

He further writes in this letter;

“The conduct of these prisoners was almost defiant and unruly, they poured forth the most abusive language towards the Government and the Chiefs of the native States. All of them admitted that they were present at the attack on Malodh and Kotla, and gloried in the act;” (25)

Mr. Cowen asked the leader of the troop, “ Why have you mutinied?”

Sardar Heera Singh answered in a loud voice,

“We do not want the rule of the Phirangis(British) , but that of our own brothers. We shall mutiny till your rule is uprooted. We shall kill and die for this cause but we shall expel you from our country.” (26)

Mr. Cowen face turned fiery red on getting this answer. Without any summary trial or legality, he ordered that the captives be blown by the cannons.

“The Phirangi ordered that they (Kukas) be tied to the mouths of the cannons. The Singhs (Kukas) asked the executioner to stand aside for they would stand in front of the cannons themselves. Then making a roars they stood in front of the cannons. The British asked them to turn their backs to the guns but they insisted on facing the guns and the courageous Sikhs stood with their chests touching the guns.”(27)

Seven cannons boomed for seven times. 49 Sikhs were torn to shreds for the freedom of their motherland. There were two children in that jatha (troop). One was Bishan Singh and the other was Harnam Singh.

Bishan was twelve year old. On the advice of his wife Mr. Cowen said to him, “Say that you are not a Sikh of Ram Singh and I shall spare your life” On hearing insulting words, his eyes started to flash with anger and he was enraged. He pounced and roared like a lion and caught hold of Kevin’s beard and said , “Will you dare to say again that I am not a Sikh of Sat guru Ram Singh?” He gave such a tug to the beard that Mr. Cowen saw stars dancing before .

his eyes. He grimaced with pain. The sepoy's standing nearby too were at their wit's end. They quickly first chopped his hands off with a sword and later beheaded him. Commenting on Bishan Singh Mr. Cowen writes,

“One man escaped from the guards and made a furious attack on me, and as he was a very powerful man, I had considerable difficulty in realizing myself.”(28)

The other child was Harnam Singh who was only nine years old and had a deep desire to martyr himself. Since he could not come upto the cannon being a child, he ran to his mama (uncle) and jumped piggyback to him. The duo stood in front of the cannon and were martyred when the gun blew off. Sant Harnam Singh writes;

“The gun booms nearby and blows the body
to the shreds

The shell hitting the torso throws it a great
distance

The heads thus severed are tossed up due
to the blast

The limbs and the head sometimes stayed
behind

While the torso was blown away

The guns powdered the bones and
shredded the flesh

The guns muddied the blood and piled up
the bones
Somehow killing the forty nine martyrs,
the guns fell silent
Harnam Singh, such was the plight there
that the sun could stay no longer
And setteled in the west.” (29)

The next morning of January 18th, 1872, the commissioner Mr. Forsyth too reached Malerkotla. After completing the legal formalities, the remaining 16 Kukas too were blown to pieces with the help of the cannons. One of these was Sardar Waryam Singh . For him the Maharaja of Patiala had pleaded acquittal. The English officer asked him to move away from the cannon for he was short statured. Waryam Singh ran to the fields nearby and collected huge lumps of earth and made a platform and standing on it asked the English, “Look Phirangi, now I am upto your cannon, you blow it”.

In this way in the saga of Malerkotla, 10 Sikhs while fighting, 4 serving the sentence at Andaman’s Cellular Jail, 65 with the cannons while one with the sword were killed. In this way 80 Kukas were martyred at Malerkotla.

As per the telegram sent by the government of India to the Secretary of State for India on 07.02.1872 the tragic incident of Malerkotla is recorded thus;

“About one hundred and twenty-five kukas attacked Malerkotla, fifteenth January, were repulsed, eight killed, nine captured; of the rest sixty-eight surrendered next day, twenty-seven wounded, to an officer and three troopers of Patiala, were made over to Deputy commissioner of Ludhiana at Malerkotla, of which State he was incharge , pending disputed succession , and where about seven hundred and fifty Patiala, Jind and nabha troops with nine guns had joined him. Deputy Commissioner on seventeenth, without formal trial or needful sanction of Commissioner , illegally blew away forty-nine from guns (cannons). Commissioner arriving next day tried legally and hanged sixteen others(blew with cannons). Government of India wholly disapproved these wholesale executions which seem quite unjustifiable, and has suspended Deputy Commissioner pending further enquiry. Every thing now quite. .”(30)

Sir Henry Cotton writes,

“These reminiscences of 1872 , would be incomplete without some reference to what can I describe as the massacre of malerkotla..... for my part I can recall nothing during my services in India more revolting and shocking than these execution”.”(31)

The voice of protest printed in the Friend Of India was in this way;

“We protest , without waiting for official documents, against the whole sale military execution ordered by Mr. Deputy Commissioner Cowen” without waiting for any official press release . (32)”

In the same news paper, news were published on april 4, 1872,

“ nothing on earth that the opposite party can prove will justify the acts of Messers Cowen and Forsyth.”
(****)

Many modern historians write that the Kukas were first tied to the cannons and then blown off which is wrong completely. Because the writer of Panth Prakash Giani Gian Singh ji was an eye witness to this gory incident, he writes in the Panth Prakash that he had read about the earlier martyrdoms of the Kukas but this he has seen for himself and is writing about it.....

“Un Singhan ka haal to likhio kitabaan maah
hum nij nainan jo pikhio so ab saach sunahe
Un hit hukam angrezi aiyo in ko topan sang udaiyo
Jab eh hukam unhen sunayo khushi bhaye ati heey
hulsayo

Mukh per laali charhi badhere gavat Guru ke shabad
uchere

Deeve per jyon ati patange tyon topan dis jayee

nishange Ude khushi hai hai kar saare zara na kine
praan piyare Ih hamne khud nan nihare dekhat thie
j o log apare Rahe hiran tin pikh saare.”(33)

This another matter that as per the records the
cannons that were used to blow off the Kukas
belonged the the Raja of Nabha and “as per the
Indian Army records maharaja Nabha had H404
Napoleon guns which had no provision of tying a
human being to blow him off. Only 402 American
Civil War Cannons had this provision. This later 1858
model which was afterwards considered redundant
and outdated. This model was phased out with new
H402 and Armstrong Cannons which had no
provision of tying a human being.”(34)

Mr. Foresythe ,who had blown off 16 kukas with
cannons at Malerkotla praises the bravado of the
Kuka Singhs thus;

“Those who are aware of the history of Punjab know
that these Sikhsw had a strong desire to be blown
off by the cannons instead of being hanged at the
hands of an executioner. This is what the Kukas
had told the officers present there.”(35)

Mr.Foresythe does not nmention the tying of kukas
to the connons. Thre was no need to tie the kuka
Sikhs.As per the British records they had

surrendered themselves. They had martyred themselves by making earthen platforms, by eposing their bosoms to the guns. The child martyred himself by jumping on to the back of his uncle. Where was the need to tie them? Sardar Sunder Singh Mast Bhaura writes;

“Looking for reasons to erase your glory
But your disciples enhanced it further more at Kotla
Running to the cannon mouths they sang your
praises with smiles
O executioner hold your atrocities that your bow
may not break
These are stories etched on the Sikh history and
shall stay there forever
Even the devil doesn't approve of this carnage what
to say of human praises.”

The saka of Malerkotla was a unique and bloodiest example of Brutish massacre in the world history which deeply swayed the psyche of the people the world over and had shaken the very walls of the British Parliament. A British traveler was so moved by the incident that he said,

“The whole of Europe is proud of one Jesus's sacrifice. I have today sees hundreds of Jesuses getting sacrificed.”(36)

This was the beginning of the martyrdoms, after this the British atrocities started to rain literally.

THE REIGN OF TERROR

1. The police raided the Shri Bhaini Sahib Gurudwara, conducted searches and confiscated the personal and religious articles. The present 172 men and Women Namdharis present there were arrested and brought to Ludhiana and investigated. Of these 50 were such Sikhs as had totally committed themselves to the service of Satguru after renouncing their worldly belongings. They were detained for further investigations and the rest were sent to their respective homes. A special police post was established at the main gate of the gurudwara which stayed there for almost 50 years till 1923. Those who went for darshans at the gurudwara had to get their names registered and were investigated. The police personnel used filthy language. In short, gurudwara Bhaini Sahib was reduced to a jail.
2. Shri Satguru Ram Singh Ji was arrested on January 17th, 1872. On the morning of 18th January he was sent to the Alahabad jail by a special train. From there he was taken to Calcutta on 10th March 1872 and on the

evening of 11th march he was deported to Rangoon for imprisonment. Satguru Ji reached Rangoon on the morning of 16.03.1872. But the Sikhs established contacts with him even in the alien lands and they would bring the guru's Hukamnamas (edicts) to the homeland and would preach the Guru's message among the people. Mr.L.H. Harifen writes on 12.10.1877;

Ram singh is regularly communicating with his disciples in Punjab through letters. The Government of India has got many copies of these letters secretly".(37)

- 3: For this reason after eight and half years Satguru Ram Singh Ji was sent to a far off place Margoi. Guruji reached Margoi on 21st september 1880. But here too Guru Ji was able to establish contacts with the Russians with the aid of his Sikh disciples. As a result the British spread a rumor of his death on 29th November 1885. But a lie is always a lie. Even the official records prove that this rumor was spread to break the Satguru's contacts with his followers because

“(A) Satguru Ram Singh was lared to be dead on 29th November 1885 while the Chief Commissioner of Berma Sir Charles Bernard Shaw wrote in a letter

to his Indian friend Sardar Attar Singh Bhadour, "Ram Singh Kuka is shifted to such a far off place where it will not be easy to keep contact with him.

(B) The reason of Satguru's death was stated to be diarrhea while as per the statement Appendix No. XVI-Vital of the Berma jail of 1885, no prisoner was declared dead due to diarrhea.

(C) On the page 170 of the 1891 census report of Berma Satguru Ram Singh's death was recorded in 1887 or 1888 which clearly shows that the government was only telling lies. In fact they never came to know where and when Satguru went away, hence the British kept trying to pacify themselves with the different dates of the Satguru's death".(38)

When Satguru Hari Singh was told of the guru's death, the British could not produce Satguru's personal belongings like clothes Gutka Garwa etc. The small sized clothes that were given to Satguru Hari Singh ji were ill fitting even to Satguru Hari Singh Ji while the British record showed Satguru Ram Singh Ji to be healthier and taller than Satguru Hari Singh ji. In fact the news of the Satguru's death was false which was spread to break the Sikhs' contacts with their Guru.

3. The Government of Punjab had ordered the arrest of all the main soobas(jathedars) along with Satguru Ram Singh ji before the saka of Malerkotla. Informing the Government of India about it the Punjab govt. wrote on January 16, 1872;

“The Lieut. Governor has issued orders to arrest Ram Singh and other main soobas Sahib Singh, Roor Singh, Lakha Singh Kahan Singh, Brahma Singh, Jawahar Singh Malook Singh and Maan Singh. Ram Singh will be soon arrested. In order to arrest him General Titler has had detailed discussions with the Divisional Commissioner.”(39)

The Punjab govt. wrote through another letter to the Govt. of India that

“I have been directed by the hon’ble Lieut. Governor to request that my yesterday’s letter No. 9C has omitted the name of Sooba Pahara Singh for whom a warrant under regulation III 1818 is required.”(40)

All the above mentioned Soobas were first sent to Allahabad. Along with them Sardar Mangal Singh too was arrested. Later on Sooba Sahib Singh and Sooba Kahan Singh were sent first to Adan and then on 23-04-1875 were shifted to the Hazaribagh jail. On June 10th 1879 Sooba Sahib Singh ji got martyrdom in the jail and Sooba Kahan Singh was sent the Fort Chunar on 25-05-1880. Sooba Jawahar Singh, Sooba Lakha Singh and Sooba Brahma Singh were imprisoned

in Moulmeen at Berma. In the jail Sooba Jawahar Singh expired on 29-11-1882 and Sooba Lakha Singh on 05-02-1903. Sooba Roor Singh. Sooba Malook Singh and Sooba Pahara Singh were imprisoned in Aseedgarh (Bombay).

Sooba Maan Singh And Sooba Hukma Singh were shifted from Alahabad to the Chunar Fort on 09-12-1872

4. All the Namdhari Sikhs were declared outlaws. The Punjab Govt. by its order of 15 February, 1872 put all the Namdhari Sikhs under surveillance in their respective villages and made it mandatory for them to seek govt. permission for any kind of movement to and from their villages. They even had to seek essential govt. permission to participate in their social and religious functions.(41)

5. The department of Police Punjab issued a directive on 23-01-1872 which was sent to all the Commissioners and Deputy commissioners which stated that, "The hon'ble lieut. Governor feels pleasure in issuing this order tht Kukas should not be allowed to gather more than five persons in their congregations".(42)

Then there was these addition in the order of 26-02-1872, " The above mentioned order is applicable to the religious places of the Kukas which are known as the Dharamshalas".(43)

In this way there was a prohibition on the religious congregations. Punishment was given to those who held the Paath of Aadi Shri Granth Sahib and the priests who performed it. For instance Shri Uttam Singh and Baba Chuhar Singh of Raesar had to serve a sentence of six months each for this path..Sant Punjab Singh and Taba ji of village Jhorar were imprisoned many times. Every household article of Baba Sahib Singh of Bassian was confiscated for this crime . His sons Sant Singh and Karam Singh had to go to jail for six months. In the Rupane village 44 sikhs had to go to jails for six months.

6.The whole of the Namdhari Panth was declared a class of criminals. As per the Criminal Procedure Act X of 1872's clause 504- 505,Namdhari Sikhs had to give undertakings of good behaviour to the govt.

SHRI SATGURU HARI SINGH JI

In these conditions in 1876 as per the order of Guru Ram Singh Ji Satguru Hari Singh ji took the reins of the Namdhari Sect in his hands.He too was put under house arrest at Bhaini Sahib for twenty years.It was a time when the whole of the panth was suffering a reign of terror at the hands of the govt.,atrocities at the hands of supporters of the British. On the other hand there was the police post at the main gate of the BhainiSahib Gurudwara and curbs on the Sikhs to have a darshan.Guru Hari

Singh ji continued his struggle against the British from the jail. To send the Sikhs to Guru Ram Singh ji, write letters and to establish political relations with foreign powers was not an easy task. In 1878-1881 AD Baba Gurcharan Singh Namdhari Succeeded in establishing good relations with Russia. He told them about Guru Hari Singh ji in Punjab, his large following of the namdharis and their anger for the British. The governor there whose name was Koffman started to have deep respect for Baba Gurcharan Singh. Powerful Raja Budh Singh alias satguru Hari Singh got a letter promising help from the Russian govt. Satguru Hari Singh ji sent some letters to Russia and the Russian govt. sent some gifts to Bhaini Sahib. Baba Gurbachan Singh was arrested by the British govt in 1881. Afterwards Bishan Singh Arora of Kabul kept in touch with the Russians. The other agents who were useful in letter communication were Maya Hindu, Shankar Rae, Ram Charan Tora. Bhagwan Singh Adbangi too reached Russia via Kashmir.

When the kukas came to know of the arrival of Maharaja Daleep Singh in Russia the Kuka Sikhs felt elated. Young Namdharis had reached Russia with active help from satguru Hari Singh ji and Bishan Singh Arora to help the Maharaja. Meeha Singh of Sarhali and many other namdharis started to launch an army. Even the British govt had reports

that kukas were trying to enlist in large numbers in the Russian Army. But the Sikhs of Punjab did not give a positive response to Maharaja Daleep Singh who lost all hope and returned to Europe.

It is a historical fact that "in 1881 only 14 kukas out of the 80 Indians arrested under Bengal Regulation III, 1818 were serving their terms in the state jails".(44)

THE FAMINE

In the time of Guru Hari Singh ji there was a famine and people started to die in large numbers because of hunger. The langar that had been going on at Bhaini Sahib since 1857 was opened to the hungry people. People started to flock Bhaini Sahib to quench their hunger. The English were already afraid of the Bhaini Sahib. The English officer reached Bhaini Sahib and showed false sympathy and said "I am happy at your philanthropist spirit that you arranged food for so many people. I want to give you 2500 acre land for the langar. Satguru Hari Singh Ji replied, "The whole India is ours. What 2500 acres of land are you talking about? We are the owners of this land. How can you give me my land? even this famine is due to your bad intentions". It was a fact too. The British had started to export grain from India to England. In the times of Satguru Hari Singh

ji, the grain exported was worth 79 lakh Pounds in 1877 (Rs 7 crore 90 lakhs), 43 lakh pounds in 1901 (Rs. 13 crore 95 lakh). In the year 1914 twenty two times more grain was sent to England than was sent in 1849. At that time the grain was priced at Re. 1 for two mans (app. 80 kgms). (45)

According to the economic statistics in the time of Satguru Ram Singh ji there were 24 famines till 1872 in which 64 lakh people perished. But the famines that befell the country in the lifetime of Satguru Hari Singh Ji devoured one crore fifty lakh people. During these turbulent years Guru ji kept his struggle up against the British.

SHRI SATGURU PARTAP SINGH JI

In 1906 AD Satguru Partap Singh Ji ascended the Guru Gaddi. During those days The Congress had got politically activated. With the guru's blessings and orders the namdharis started to participate in the struggle for freedom along with the congressmen. In Punjab or outside Punjab where ever there was a political gathering Namdharis participated in large numbers. The first World War broke out in 1914. All the parties supported the British and inspired people to enlist in the army. But Namdhari knew the ways of the British and they refused to participate in the war. Others had thought that the British do

something for the country after the war. But what happened was entirely contrary to their hopes. British brought in the Rowlatt Act. There were agitations in the country as a protest against this act and in 1919 Jallian walla bagh saka took place on the Baisakhi day. The next year Congress held its session at Amritsar. Namdharis participated in large numbers. In 1925 the Congress started an agitation against the British whose center was Bradley Hall Lahore. Sant Mangal Singh Fatuhi Chak, Pandat Mansa Singh, Sant Nidhan Singh Alim namdharis lead the agitation and courted arrests many times. In the Calcutta session Maharaja Gurdial Singh participated. The annual session of the congress was held at Lahore in December 1929 where the resolution for complete independence was adopted. At that time the common Sikh was divided. Baba Kharak Singh Akali who was a top notch Sikh leader announced that whosoever participated in the congress function would not be a Sikh. But the great patriots Namdharis not only participated in the function but also shouldered the responsibility and expences of the langar. In the procession taken out on the ocassion the Namdhari Sikhs looked in their full glory.

“In order to make this procession a great success as per the orders of the Guru the Namdhri Sikhs contributed a lot. Clad in spotless white Khadi the

Namdhari Sikhs looked grand. Maharaja Nihal Singh ji rode by the side of Pandit Nehru and after them were marching on the horse backs the angelic namdhari Sikhs. Had the Satguru not sent the Namdharis to participate in that procession or Mata Jeevan Kaur ji had not arranged the langar the function would have been an utter fiasco.”(46)

During the same days The Kuka Congress Dal came into existence. On 17th February n1939 AD State Peoples Conference was held at Ludhiana. Satguru Partap Singh Ji participated in the procession lead out on this occasion along with many Kukas. After the function Pandit Nehru Dr, Patabhi Sita Ramayya and many political leaders reached the Karambhoomi of Satguru Ram Singh Ji at Shri Bhaini Sahib.

In order to highlight the feeling of independence and to make them aware of the attempts to achieve it newspapers and magazines contributed a lot. In this field from may 1920 t onwards Weekly newspaper. The Satyug played a great role. This paper was confiscated many a time for highlighting the anti British feelings. It was illegal for the army men to read this newspaper of the Namdharis. Due to the many confiscations of The Satyug another newspaper “Kuka” started publication that later on published under the title “Mastana” for some time.

In the time of Satguru Partap Singh Ji Bhaini Sahib had become a safe haven for bathe patriots bandother proclaimed Baghis. Whether it was Sardar Teja Singh Swatanter or communist leader Mohan Singh Josh or Rattan Singh Babbar Akali; for all of them Bhaini sahib had become a center of meetings and sharing of the ideas. When Subhash Chander Bose constituted the Indian National Army Its center was Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, where the responsibility of the supply secretary was shouldered by the Namdhari Seth Gurbakhsh Singh. And Neta ji's driver's duty was performed by Seth Tarlok Singh. Even when Netaji was weighed with coins to tide over the financial crunch the Namdhari Sikhs were in the forefront. Therefore Netaji had said, "The sacrifices that the Kukas have done under the banner of Satguru Ram Singhji will ever be a matter of pride for the country. Now again it is expected of these brave patriotic Namdharis that they will be the front runners holding high the banner of freedom and inspire other countrymen for sacrifices."

In 1945 the Wavel conference was held at Shimla. All the patriotic political parties reached Shimla. Satguru Partap Singhji also reached there. Pt. Nehru asked, "Maharaj Ji, What is your demand?" Satguru ji answered, "Why should we ask for anything of the English? I have only one desire of freedom. In the free country cow slaughter should be completely

banned and the poor should flourish.”

Not only this, the British had sowed such a seed of division among people of all castes and creeds that people had started hating each other. In order to fill this gulf between different religions organized Guru Nanak All Communities Conference in 1934 and Hindu

SIKH MILAP CONFERENCE AT BHAINI SAHIB.

The leaders of the various communities of the country agreed to the Guru's efforts and pledged to be united in future.

In short the Namdharis kept waging a war against the British for 90 years continuously from 1857 to 1947. Therefore the British had written, “It is a fact that the question of the Kuka loyalty to the British does not arise”.(47)

At last the sacrifices of the patriots brought fruit and , Satguru Ram Singh's policies proved right and the country got independent. The great Indian poet Shri Rabinder Nath Tagore had said, “By burning their ribs the Kukas kept that light burning as a result of which the peace, freedom, democracy and mutual faith got a divine aura and enlightenment”.

SHRI SATGURU JAGJEET SINGH JI

It has been 60 years since the country got independence and 150 years since the Kuka movement started. But that divine lamp of peace, unity, brotherhood, mutual faith and human welfare is still enlightened at the pious land of Shri Bhaini Sahib and is spreading its light the world over.

In the present time, Shri Satguru Jagjeet Singh Ji Maharaj where on the one hand wants the welfare of India, on the other he is busy constructing institutions for the complete welfare of humanity, welfare of the youth, construction of a vegetarian and intoxicant less society, sustaining religious customs, educational institution, Gurmati sangeet centres and sports academy in India and abroad.

Shri Satguru Jagjeet Singh Ji has this heart felt desire and pure motive that there should be peace in the world, the narrow walls of caste creed and cult in the people's mind should crumble and they have the divine light of God, the Almighty in their hearts and for the fulfillment of this desire he is traveling the seven continents.

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